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AUKUS and the Community: Shaping Perth's South-West Corridor

Perth's south-west corridor is set to take a leading role as Australia's home of AUKUS. Yet local residents remain largely disengaged, with limited understanding of the scale, scope, opportunities and challenges associated with the agreement.

In 2024, the Perth South West Metropolitan Alliance led a delegation to the United States, examining best practice social licence initiatives. The delegation studied how US defence communities build local understanding about defence policies and their economic impacts, and explored programs designed to manage significant industrial growth. The Alliance's subsequent report provided an analysis of these US practices tailored to an Australian context.

Given that AUKUS is one of several major projects shaping the region—including Westport, the State Government's "Made in WA" initiative in the Western Trade Coast, and major health infrastructure developments—a strategic approach to community engagement is essential. Effective communication strategies are required to build public understanding and address concerns around risks, infrastructure demands, and social support.

Viewing these interconnected projects through a City Building lens, rather than solely as defence or industrial undertakings, offers significant opportunities. Such an integrated perspective can maximise social and economic benefits, while proactively mitigating potential negative impacts from rapid industrial and population growth. This approach ensures Perth's south-west is not only equipped for the national responsibilities under AUKUS but also positioned to thrive economically and socially.